

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PEPR, PBOR, MILI, LE, IS

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: MOVEMENT OF LEBANESE TROOPS

REF: TEL AVIV 9519

1. FOLLOWING INFO ON COMPOSITION OF FIRST BRIGADE MAY BE USEFUL IN AMBASSADOR LEWIS'S DISCUSSIONS WITH WEIZMAN ON MOVEMENT OF LEBANESE TROOPS SOUTH.
2. U.S. MILITARY SURVEY TEAM SPENT SEVERAL DAYS WITH AND AROUND LEBANESE ARMY FIRST BRIGADE IN ABLAH AND RAYAK DURING MID-APRIL. AMONG OTHER ASSIGNMENTS, TEAM EVALUATED BRIGADE'S CAPABILITIES TO GARRISON SOUTH. FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE DISTILLED FROM DRAFT TEAM REPORT WITH ADDI-
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TIONAL THOUGHTS FROM BUREAU POL/MIL ADVISER WHO WAS A MEMBER OF SURVEY TEAM.

3. LTC ADIB SAAD, MARONITE SELECTED BY LAF CDR KHOURY IN MARCH TO RECONSTITUTE THE FORMER SOUTHERN COMMAND, HAD JUST ARRIVED IN ABLAH DURING TEAM'S VISIT. HE IMPRESSED TEAM AS EARNEST AND PROFESSIONAL BUT WITHOUT MUCH FLASH.

LACK OF VIBRANCE, HOWEVER, MAY BE ASSET IN CURRENT ASSIGNMENT. DESPITE RECENCY OF ARRIVAL AT THAT TIME, SAAD APPEARED HARD AT WORK TRYING TO BUILD FORCES AND

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SOUTHWARD MOVE.

4. KHOURY'S INITIAL PLAN FOR GARRISONING SOUTH ENVISIONED TWO-STEP OPERATION. STAGE ONE, IMPLEMENTATION OF WHICH HAD JUST BEGUN IN APRIL, ENVISIONED DISPATCH OF THREE, ESSENTIALLY DISMOUNTED INFANTRY COMPANIES TO BE COLOCATED WITH UNIFIL UNITS AT LITANI BRIDGES. THREE MORE-OR-LESS ESTABLISHED COMPANIES, ONE EACH FROM TRIPOLI, SARBA AND THE MUSLIM UNIT IN WEST BEIRUT, CAME TO ABLAH FOR THIS PURPOSE. AFTER ABOUT ONE MONTH'S TRAINING, HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THEY WERE RETURNED IN WHOLE OR IN PART TO FORMER STATIONS. IT MAY BE THAT SOME TROOPS FROM THESE UNITS ARE AMONG THE 500-ODD NOW ON HAND FOR THE MOVE SOUTH.

5. STAGE TWO OF THE ORIGINAL PLAN INVOLVED REINFORCEMENT OF THESE COMPANIES WITH WHAT LAF WAS CALLING "LITANI BRIGADE" OF 600 OR SO TROOPS THEN IN TRAINING AT ABLAH-RAYAK. TEAM WAS STRUCK BY TWO ASPECTS OF RUDIMENTARY BRIGADE'S SITUATION. ON ONE HAND, TROOPS IN TRAINING EXERCISES APPEARED EAGER, ENTHUSIASTIC AND FAIRLY KNOWLEDGEABLE GIVEN BREVITY OF INSTRUCTION WHICH PRECEDED TEAM'S VISIT. DISCIPLINE WAS NOTABLY TIGHT AND TROOPS MOVED SNAPPILY FROM SECRET

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ONE TASK TO ANOTHER. ON OTHER HAND, AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT WAS PITIFULLY INADEQUATE. DEDICATED BRIGADE EQUIPMENT AT THAT TIME INCLUDED ONLY SMALL ARMS AND 18 SALADIN ARMORED CARS, ONLY HALF OF WHICH TEAM COULD ACKNOWLEDGE AS OPERATIONAL. A FEW YUGOSLAV-BUILT LIGHT AA GUNS WERE AVAILABLE, BUT WITHOUT AMMUNITION. FORCE HAD NO INFANTRY CREW-SERVED WEAPONS AT ALL AND VERY LITTLE TRANSPORT.

6. FORMATIONS ORGANIZED AND EQUIPPED AS IT THEN APPEARED (AND STILL DOES) WOULD BE THE VANGUARD OF LAF PRESENCE BELOW THE LITANI, WOULD BE VIABLE ONLY IF WELL INSULATED FROM CONFRONTATION WITH ANY OF DIVERSE DISSIDENT ELEMENTS IN AREA. CURRENT PLAN TO SURROUND LAF PRESENCE WITH UNIFIL ASSETS MAY ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THIS REQUIREMENT.

7. FOLLOWING JUDGMENTS TAKEN FROM US-ONLY APPENDIX TO TEAM REPORT MAY BE USEFUL FYI: BEGIN TEXT. IT IS THE SURVEY TEAM'S JUDGMENT THAT AS A MINIMUM, A REASONABLY COHESIVE AND WELL EQUIPPED FORCE OF ABOUT 1000 MEN WOULD BE REQUIRED EITHER TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR A SECTOR NOW PATROLLED BY UNIFIL OR TO BEGIN A TRANSITION THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY SEE UNIFIL PHASED OUT. THE EQUIPMENT NEED NOT BE EXOTIC

NOR SOPHISTICATED. WHAT IS CLEARLY REQUIRED, HOWEVER, IS SUFFICIENT DEPENDABLE TRUCK TRANSPORT TO DEPLOY THE FORCE INITIALLY, TO MAINTAIN ITS COMMUNICATIONS AND TO INSURE THE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT. IT WOULD NEED, IN ADDITION TO

INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS - MACHINEGUNS, MORTARS, RECOILLESS RIFLES OR OTHER PORTABLE ANTITANK WEAPONS - TO GIVE CONFIDENCE TO THE TROOPS AND PROVIDE A REASONABLE PUNCH WITH WHICH TO RESPOND IF ATTACKED. A COMPANY OR MORE OF EFFECTIVE ARMORED CARS WOULD ALSO BE AN IMMUTABLE REQUIREMENT. ACCORDING TO BG KHOURY'S ESTIMATE, WITH WHICH THE TEAM FINDS NO CAUSE TO DISAGREE, BARRING MAJOR SET-BACKS (SUCH AS ANOTHER FAYYADIYAH INCIDENT) AN ADDITIONAL SIX MONTHS TO ONE YEAR WOULD BE NECESSARY TO FIELD SUCH A UNIT
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FROM CURRENT RUDIMENTS OF THE SOUTHERN FRONT FORCE. THIS ESTIMATE PRESUPPOSES PROCUREMENT LEAD TIME VERY FAVORABLE TO THE EFFORT AS WELL AS THE MINIMUM PERIOD REQUIRED FOR THE TRAINING AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MUTUAL COMMANDER-SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS OF CONFIDENCE ESSENTIAL FOR EFFICIENT ACTION UNDER PRESSURE. END TEXT.
CHRISTOPHER

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